

Newport County Unified High School  
Exploratory Committee  
Minutes

6:00 -7:30 PM – Tuesday July 2, 2014 – Middletown Public Library

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### Attendees

**Present:** **Barbara A. VonVillas**, Middletown Town Council, Chair; **Justin S. McLaughlin**, Newport City Council, Vice Chair; **Richard P. Adams**, Middletown Town Council; **Marco T. Camacho**, Newport City Council; **Kellie E. DiPalma**, Middletown School Committee; **Sandra J. Flowers**, Newport School Committee; **Robert B. Power**, Newport School Committee;

**Not Present:** **Naomi L. Neville**, Newport City Council; **William R. O'Connell**, Middletown School Committee

### Approval of Minutes

The minutes of June 23, 2014 were reviewed and unanimously approved.

### Discussion

#### *League of Women Voters (LWV) Forum Discussion*

A general discussion of the LWV Forum began with Committee observations on charter schools and how they might relate to a unified high school or district. The Committee noted that stand-alone charter schools would inherently further fragment the available student population and would have serious financial impacts on the existing school systems.

It was also noted that some school systems have addressed these problems by embedding a charter school within the public school. It was also noted that, as presently proposed, Newport County charter schools do not include high school students.

Specific observations on the LWV forum were as follows:

- The LWV and especially the moderator, Patty Mcleish, deserved special thanks from the Committee for their willingness to sponsor the forum and especially for Patty's professional control of the forum process.
- Attendance was disappointing due to many events on the same evening and limited advertising. There were 25-30 attendees, a significant number of whom were school system employees or school board members.
- The public is generally not yet engaged in the issue, at least not to the extent of engaging in a public discussion.
- Most of the speakers at the Forum were not asking questions but were making statements.
- A significant number of participants were passionate in opposition. There were few speakers equally passionate in support.
- Although the stated purpose of the forum was to identify questions related to unification, the Committee attempted to answer the questions posed but was largely unable to do so to the participant's satisfaction.

The Committee agreed that the fundamental problem is that some questions posed require answers which are not yet available and would not be available unless the referendum question is approved allowing more exhaustive study by the Committee.

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The level of detail necessary to answer some of the questions posed has not yet been explored.

The Committee agreed that the LWV Forum highlighted the need for a comprehensive information campaign to engage the public in a robust debate on the merits. The campaign needs to provide clear answers to questions with as much information as is available. It was suggested that the information campaign consist primarily of direct mailings.

**Attachments**

None

**Proposed Meetings Calendar**

The next meeting is Wednesday July 30th at 6:00 PM at the Middletown Public Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Richard Adams